

Parshas Chukas-Balak 5762

Rabbi Emanuel Feldman once gave a drosho about the connection between the תבוא אמו ותקנח, עגל הזהב, and the sin of the פרה אדומה, citing Rashi: צואת בנה. After davening a congregant says to him: Rabbi, that was very interesting, but what is the ritual of the Red Pepper?

זאת חוקת התורה. Rashi: חוק - פרה אדומה - epitome of.

Shlomo Hamelech: אמרתי אחכה והיא רחוקה ממני, Chazal say refers to פרה אדומה. (פרה אדומה = והיא רחוקה, in gematriya, - רבינו בחיי)

Why more enigmatic than other מצות?

Furthermore, Rashi gives reason: תבוא אמו ותקנח. Not worse than other טעמי המצות.

What is connectin between עגל and פרה אדומה. How does פרה אדומה "clean up" mess of the עגל?

פסקה זוהמתן. (We learned about it in שיעור השני.) No יצר הרע, no death. But חטא העגל plunged them back into mortality.

So death is result of חטא העגל.

But - if they had no יצה"ר, how did חטא happen? Answer in גמרא ע"ז: אריב"ל לא עשו ישראל את העגל אלא ליתן פתחון פה לבעלי תשובה שנאמר מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי כל הימים

But if there would have been no עגל there would have been no יצה"ר. So why did there have to be a חטא העגל to be מורה תשובה לרבים?

End of history: יום שכולו טוב. So why not go there directly? Which is what happened at סני: ניסים ונפלאות took us with revelation, forcibly brought us up to highest spiritual state.

But that is not the ultimate רצון השם. The ultimate goal should come about through תשובה - there should be טומאה and evil in the world - and in man - which man, by his own efforts, overcomes. We don't understand why - why not go the short and easy way - but that is the inscrutable רצון השם.

And therefore he allowed the חטא העגל to happen, so that death and evil - which had momentarily been defeated - were relased back into the world. Why? להורות - to launch the process of תשובה that eventually - over the course of history - would defeat them.

The פרה אדומה - the instrument with which the טומאה of death is cleansed - represents that entire process of תשובה and גאולה with which death and evil are to be overcome. And that fact that the פרה itself is a cow - a mature עגל - demonstrates that in the Divine plan the purpose of the חטא העגל itself was to launch the process of תשובה which the פרה represents.

And therefore פרה אדומה is the ultimate חוק. The חוק is not in the details of the laws of פרה אדומה - but, rather, in the very need for the פרה, in the need for there to be death and evil and pain in the world at all. The חוק is not the פרה but the עגל, which made the פרה necessary, and which made death and sorrow the companions of life and joy.

That is the mystery that caused שלמה המלך to cry in despair: אמרתי אחכמה והיא רחוקה ממני.

We stand at the beginning of חודש תמוז, that very month in which the חטא העגל took place, and which marks the beginning of the period of בין המצרים, the tragic three weeks before the חורבן - the result of those tragic processes which the חטא העגל unleashed - took place.

And we stand at the end of a week in which death and tragedy have again been visited upon our people in ארץ ישראל.

And it is appropriate that we enter this month with the reading of פרה אדומה. Because this פרשה reminds us that while טומאה is strong, it is not invincible. The טומאה of death can be purified; and, ultimately, death itself will be defeated. And if the existence of טומאה, of death and evil, is a חוק, a mystery, rooted in the inscrutable will of the רבונו של עולם, ultimately we are assured that even the חטא העגל, which released טומאה back into the world, was meant להורות תשובה לרבים, to open the way to תשובה, just as these dark days of בין המצרים, which lie ahead, lead on to the days of תשובה and renewal, just beyond.